Results of grade three:

Table 1 Students' results of grade three per category (N=1066)

	Writing (2 items)	Reading Comprehension (5 items)	Word knowledge (3 items)	**Total scores (10 items)**
Mean	13.7	30.4	15.2	**59.3**
Maximum	20	50	30	**100**

The total average score is 59.3, i.e. 59 per cent of all the ten question-areas in test is correctly responded. The high standard deviation indicates that the results are widely spread and that the variance of the students' results is large. The results per categories indicate the children are weak in Word Knowledge, i.e. 15.2 out of 30 = 50 % responded correctly, while they performed better in Writing i.e. 13.7 = 68 % correctness and in Reading Comprehension 30.4 out of 50 = 61 % responded correctly.

According to BCL, the accepted performance is defined by identifying what cannot be approved: "a score of above 33 per cent and below 60 per cent is clearly below the internationally accepted basic competency" (UNICEF, 1999 p8) although the passing percentage in Afghanistan was traditionally set at a minimum score of 33 per cent (ibid.).

Grade three:

Table 2 Students' results as per achieved percentage

	Scores per cent	Number of Students	Students, Per cent	Schools average (%)
Total test score (maximum 100)	Up to 33 %	210	20	7
	33 – 60 %	266	25	47
	60 – 80 %	265	25	37
	80 – 100 %	325	30	9
TOTAL		1 066	100%	100%

In the present study only 55 per cent of the grade three students were, within the limit for internationally accepted competence i.e. have achieved results, which include more than 60 per cent correctness. While 20 % got less than 33 % - they would have failed if this were their final exam test.

Table 3 Comparison of boys' and girls' results per category (N= 825 Boys, 240 Girls)

	Writing (2 items)	Reading Comprehension (5 items)	Word knowledge (3 items)	**Total scores (10 items)**
Boys	13.3	30.5	14.9	**58.7**
Girls	15.1	30.2	16.3	**61.6**
Total	13.7	30.5	15.2	**59.3**

Generally, girls performed better than boys did in two main categories as well as in the total average - the difference is two scores. But in the category of Reading Comprehension, they do not seem to be better than boys (average scores 30.2 and 30.5 for girls and boys respectively).

Grade six:

Table 4 Students' results of grade six per category (N=636)

	Writing (4 items)	Reading Comprehension (4 items)	Word knowledge (4 items)	**Total scores (% Of total scores- 12 items)**
Mean	27	22	23	**60**
Maximum	40	40	40	**100**

The overall result of grade six students is a little better than grade three (average 60 compared to 59).

Table 5 Students' grade six results as per achieved percentage

	Scores per cent	Number of Students	Students, Per cent	Schools average (%)
Total test score (maximum 100)	Up to 33 %	80	12.5	11
	33 – 60 %	160	25.5	40
	60 – 80 %	212	33.0	37
	80 – 100 %	184	29.0	22
Total		636	100 %	100%

62 per cent of the grade six students were, within the limit for internationally accepted competence i.e. have achieved results which include more than 60 per cent correctness. While 12.5 % have scored less than 33 %. They would have failed if this were their final exam test.

Table 6 Comparison of grade six boys' and girls' results per category (N= 535 boys, 101 girls)

	Writing (2 items)	Reading Comprehension (4 items)	Word knowledge (4 items)	**Total scores (% Of total scores- 12 items)**
Boys	27	22	23	**60**
Girls	31	27	28	**72**
Total	27	22	23	**60**

In grade six once again similar results were observed. Girls did better than boys in all categories. Girls' average score is significantly different from boys score average i.e. 72 comparing to 60. In all categories girls performed better than boys. There is a significant difference between boys' and girl's achievements in all categories as well as per total average scores.

7.3.4.Comparison of Schools

There was a big difference observed between schools' average scores:

Table 7 The highest and the lowest average schools' scores

Grade three				Grade six			
School Code	Schools with low average scores	School Code	Schools with high average scores	School Code	Schools with low average scores	School Code	Schools with high average scores
E-0501-02	**33.4**	E-0607-02	**89.7**	E-0501-02	**31.7**	E-0714-02	**91.7**
E-0904-05	**33.9**	E-0901-03	**93.2**	E-0604-02	**33.3**	E-2921-02	**98.3**

This finding definitely needs further investigation and analysis.

8. Factors of Influence on Learning Achievements

In the present study, only factors related to school were considered. Therefore, we cannot relate these differences to personal or family background because those are the factors we can neither influence nor address. However, education should strive at levelling out the differences between students by an appropriate pedagogy and by addressing students' individual needs. Therefore, in .a future study family and home factors need to be explored.

The correlation analysis was performed on teachers' background, SCA support and teacher training. The correlation coefficient between students' average total scores and teachers' professional education was not significant.

The strongest correlation was observed between teachers' formal education level, teachers' sex and the level of students' achievements (see table 8 below). Students of female teachers scored higher than those of the male teachers. On the other hand, there are female teachers only in the girls' schools, hence, one can not claim whether it is the effect of teachers' sex or the students' sex, **or both,** that bring about these differences.

Table 8 Average scores per teacher sex and education level

	Teacher's sex		Teachers' education level		
Teachers' background	Male teachers	Female teachers	Less than grade 10	Secondary education	University education
Stud. Average score grade three	59	63	56	64	75
Stud. Average score grade six	60	72	Only one case	64	63

There was also a positive correlation between the length of teachers' training courses and the students' result observed; however, not considered significant.

The average repetition year per student was 0.16 and 0.34 for student in grade three and six, respectively. This means that the average student completed three and six years school in 4.5 and 8.0 years. In other worlds almost each 6th and 3rd student in grade three and six respectively had repeated one grade during their schooling.

There was a negative significance correlation observed in both grades between repetition years and achievements, i.e. those who had not repeated any grade had higher score than those had repeated; the more the repetition years the lower the scores (see table 9)

Table 9 Average scores per repeated students (0 –3 years) in grades three and six

Years repeated	0 (not repeated)	1 years repeated	2 years repeated	3 years repeated
Grade three	66	55	36	Few students
Grade six	67	54	45	Few students

The hypothesis that the longer time of SCA support to the school the higher student achievements was not proven. No difference between schools supported by SCA for longer or shorter periods was observed. As SCA provides support only to already functioning schools initiated by the local communities (there was no governmental support to education in the rural areas), it might be that schools which receive support since recent years were better schools, better organized, located close to cities (consequently high quality of teachers and school facilitates etc, compensated low material support).

In relation to family background and student achievements, an interesting point is that the average scores of children whose father have Islamic education performed better than those of other categories (no education, or other level of formal education). Children of fathers with no education scored 62, students whose fathers had university education scored 63 while children of fathers with Islamic Education scored 68. It is difficult to be explained, and similar observation was obtained in a previous study (Mansory 2000). With regards to parents' occupation it was found that children of farmers had lower scores than children whose fathers had other occupations. Farmers' children scored 61, while other categories scored around 65. Quite many children reported their fathers as dead (around 70) and they scored higher (67) than other categories. This is an interesting finding, which maybe confirms that orphans are well taken care of - if they have some one to look after them. Maybe they are also more motivated for education than others.

9. Conclusions

Generally the results are within an acceptable field but at the bottom. Considering the amount of support these schools have received from SCA and also SCA expectations the level seems to be low. As there is no comparison done with other schools for example governmental schools, the result cannot provide any comparison.

There is generally assumed that three years of education is not enough to become and remain literate. As girls mostly leave schools after grade three more emphasis and attention should be paid to improve the achievements at lower grades, e.g. better teacher instruction and learning materials could be some options for improvement. Encouraging employment of female teachers in girls' schools is another measure, which could encourage girls to stay on for more years.

There was no strong correlation between teacher training and the results. One reason could be an old model of teacher training. The teacher-training program has recently been revised but need continuous improvements.

The girls' performances were better than boys' were. However, they were not very strong in reading comprehension, which might be related to the family and environmental conditions, as girls are less exposed to and have less contact with opportunities for reading outside home.

More reading materials as storybooks and other educational material should be provided to girls' classes to encourage them to read and use reading more.

The formal education level of teachers was of more importance than their professional qualification, which indicates that there is need for revision of employment rules in SCA supported schools i.e. only teachers with at least grade 12 should be eligible to become teachers in SCA supported schools. Support to secondary schools will lead to improvement.

The great difference between schools is something that must be seriously addressed. Maybe "good" school can act as "model" or mentor schools for low achieving schools.

The result of grade six students were better and only12.5 per cent had less than 33 % of total scores, i.e. ended in the failure zone of scores. It is likely that many students have dropped out and that the most able students remain up to grade six.

10. Recommendations

The formal qualification level of the teachers can be addressed when recruiting teachers when available in the area. Adherence to SCA School Directives is a measure to overcome the problem of teachers with too low formal qualifications.
Continuous revision and improving the teachers' instructions in regard to subject teaching could be another measure.

The negative correlation between repetition years and achievements indicated that repetition should be avoided. At least the examination system should be revised - the aim of repetition is to improve learning of those who repeat to learn more, but if the repetition leaves negative implications, what is the use?

Schools with very poor results should be investigated more and given that the results of this study are true, the support to such schools should be reconsidered.

More studies in the weakest and strongest schools in order to find out the most convenient factors of influence on learning outcomes and improvement of learning and education quality are recommended.

Studies of other factors of influence on learning achievements related to school and home, for example headmaster's role, school management, school time (in morning or afternoon) and family background, family support etc should be studied to find factors for intervention.

Standardised exams should be introduced to make comparisons reliable and general.

Bibliography

Blaxter, L., Hughes E., and Tight M. (1996) How to research. Buckingham: Open University press.

Chinapah, V. (1997) Handbook on Monitoring Learning Achievement. Towards capacity building Paris: UNESCO.

Karlsson, P. (2001). *Wastes or Gains? A discussion about the concept 'educational wastage' with examples from Afghanistan.* MA Thesis, Stockholm: IIE.

Mansory, A.M. (2000) *Mathematics Achievements among Afghan Primary school Children. Exploring variations and determinants of influence for learning achievements of grade four students in rural Afghanistan.* MA Thesis, Stockholm: IIE.

Pirjolinnakyla, I. (1993) Teaching reading around the world. Hamburg: The International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Grindeldruck.

Pawar, P., Daun H., et al (1992) Draft Instruments for Assessing Learning Achievements: Survey questionnaire and tests. Studies and working documents No.2. Stockholm: Institute of International Education, Stockholm University.

Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) (1999) Peshawar: *School data 2000.*

UNICEF/SC USA (1999) Afghan Education, Basic Competencies of Learning in mathematics. Islamabad: UNICEF.

UNIICEF, (2000) *Grade III Mathematics Achievement Assessment Study, Afghanistan.* Islamabad: UNICEF.

Annex 1

Teachers Questionnaire

1. School Name: ____________ Village:______________ District:_______________

Province: ________________________School Code Number: ____________________

How long has SCA been supporting your School? Since __________________________

2. Teachers Name:___________________ Educational Qualification: _______________

Institution: _____________________ Year of Graduation: ________________________

How long have you been teaching?__________________________ years

How long have you been teaching in SCA supported schools?_____________ years

Have you received any training? _____________

How long have you been to Teachers Training College? __________________

In-service Training:

Conducted by SCA: Two Months When: ___________

Two Weeks When: ___________

Conducted by Others: Duration: _______ Months When__________

3. In your point of view, how do you assess the level of knowledge in reading and writing?

Students of Grade Three: a. very good b. average c. weak

Students of Grade Six: a. very good b. average c. weak

4. In your point of view what should be done to improve students' achievements in reading and writing?

Answer:

Students Questionnaire

1. Name ____________ 2. Age ____________

3. How many classes have you repeated? ___________ Classes

4. What grades have you repeated? ____________ Grades

5. What is your father's education level?

a. University b. Secondary c. Primary d. Religious e. Illiterate

6. What is your mother's education level?

a. University b. Secondary c. Primary d. Religious e. Illiterate

7. What is your father's profession?

____

8. How many of your brothers/sisters go to school?

a. None of them b. 1-2 of them c. 3-4 of them d. Over 5 of them

Test Paper

Name _______________.

Fathers Name _______________.

1. **Divide the following words into their letters**?
   (This part includes 5 questions)

Tips:

In this part the students are given five words and have been asked to split the words into letter they are consisted of.

(In Dari and Pushtu when we want to make words out of letters, we have to merge them together. The combination of the letters takes a new shape different from their individual look. It is considered a good practice for the students to understand the individual letters, which have formed a word.)

2. **Write the names of the following objects.**
   (This part includes 5 questions)

Tips:

(In this part, pictures of different objects have been drawn on the question sheet. Space has been provided for the students so that they can write the name of the picture they see on their papers.)

3. **Connect the pictures with their names?**
   (This part includes 5 questions)

Tip:

In this part the name of an object has been given. In front of the name appear the pictures of four objects, among them the right picture for the name of the object given. The students have to look for the object the name of which is given to them and then connect the object with its name with a pencil.

4. **Fill in the blanks with the suitable words.**
   (This part includes 5 questions)

Tips:

List of Contents

(In this part some sentences have been given with a blank in them. On the top of the sentences some five words have been provided. The students have to read the sentence and search for the proper word, amongst those given, to fill the blank with.)

5. Link the word to its synonym:
(This part includes 6 questions)

Tip:

(In this part six words appear in the first column and in front of them appear six words each of them a synonym to one of the words in the first column, however, in disordered form. The students have been directed to relate the word in column one with its synonym in column two.)

6. Link the words in column one to its antonym in column two:
(This part includes 6 questions)

Tip:

(In this part six words appear in the first column and in front of them appear six words each of them an antonym to one of the words in the first column, however, in disordered form. The students have been directed to relate the word in column one with its antonym in column two.)

7. **Read the below application letter and answer the questions that follow.**
(This part includes 3 questions)

Tip:
(This is a reading comprehension test. A passage has been provided to students in the form of a leave application. They have to read the passage carefully and provide answers to the questions that follow the passage.)

8. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences.
(This part includes 5 questions)

Tip:

(In this part students are once again provided with some blanks and have been asked fill them in. However, this time they have not been supplied with any possible words to be filled in. They have been given two sentences the first of them containing one from of a word; they are supposed to fill in the blank in the second sentence with another form of the same word.)

Test Paper (Grade Six)

Name: ____________________

Father Name: ____________________

Part one:

Use the following letters in making five meaningful words:

(Five questions in this part)

Tip:

Some twelve individual letters have been given in this part; the students have been asked to use these individual letters making five meaningful words out of them. This will enable the students understand letter combinations and making words out of letters

Part Two:

Use the following words into proper sentences:

(Five questions in this part)

Tip:

In this part five words have been provided to the students. They have been asked to use the words into proper sentences. This will enable the students understand the skill of developing sentences out of individual words.

Part Three:

Fill in the blanks choosing the suitable words given:

(Five questions in this part)

Tip:

In this part some words have been given on top. Then, five sentences appear with a blank in each. The students are asked to fill in the blank choosing the proper word from the list provided. This will improved both their logic and selection.

Part Four:

Make five meaningful sentences out of the following words:

(Five questions in this part)

Tip:

In this part some words have been given in a scramble. The students have been asked to see the scramble words and make as many as five sentences out of them.

Part Five:

9. Link the words in column one to its antonym in column two:
(This part includes 5 questions)

Tip:

In this part six words appear in the first column and in front of them appear six words each of them an antonym to one of the words in the first column, however, in disordered form. The students have been directed to relate the word in column one with its antonym in column two.

Part Six:

For each of the words below, four meanings have been given. Draw a circle around the word that is a synonym to the word.
(This part contains 5 questions)

Tip:

In this part a word has been provided and in front of it four other words. Out of these four words, one of them is the synonym to the word. The students have to find the word and draw a circle around it.

Part Seven:

Read the following passage and draw a circle around the letter of the right answer.
(Three questions in this part)

Tip:

This is a reading comprehension test. A passage has been provided to students in the form of a reading text. They have to read the passage carefully and provide answers to the questions that follow the passage.)

Part Eight:

Describe the following picture:
(This is a writing exercise)

Tip:

In this part a picture has been provided to the students. They will have to see the picture and describe in words what they see in the picture. This is considered a very good exercise for the students to describe a picture in words.

Part 9:

Write the plural form of the following words in front of them:
(This part contains five questions)
Tip:

In our languages words take some specific endings when we change them to plural. Students have to understand what word or group of words takes what ending.

In Dari we have some specific endings for the words e.g. an, ha, een, etc.

Example:

Murgh (Chicken)	Murghaan (Chickens)
Qisa (Story)	Qisaha (Stories)
Mualem (Teacher)	Mualemeen (Teachers)

Part Ten:

Please explain the following Saying:
(Students have to explain the saying in a paragraph or two)

Tip:

In this part a saying (proverb) has been given and students have been asked to explain and write the meaning/ idea of the proverb/saying in detail. This enables students test their ability in developing paragraphs also their interpretation skills.

Acknowledgements

The present study *Assessment of Learning Achievements of Reading and Writing in Primary schools* has been not only a difficult task but also a professionally challenging one. In addition it was carried out under unusual circumstances. It was implemented in November 2001. The date indicates the extraordinary and problematic situation in Afghanistan. It was possible only thanks to the very hard and honest work by SCA School Consultants. ETSU colleagues besides all the work load on their shoulders, all assisted in coding, entering data and many other things.

I express my deep gratitude to all these colleagues and wish them success in every walk of their lives.

Preface

Afghanistan is one of the countries in which educational research is greatly needed. At the same time very little systematic educational research has been conducted there.

For this reason, among others, this study is an important contribution to the construction/production of knowledge necessary for policy-making. This small report just gives a glimpse of some of the findings but a large set of data has been collected from a substantial sample of pupils. This will allow more complex and extensive analysis, which will provide rich information for those who are in charge of policymaking and implementation.

Stockholm 5 June 2002

Holger Daun
Professor
Institute of International Education, Stockholm University, Sweden

Abstract

In general, information about learning outcomes of school children in Afghanistan is missing. On the one hand, this makes it difficult to detect potential key factors that affect the teaching/learning process and students' achievements. On the other hand, it is difficult to find out the quality of learning in SCA supported schools in general and about girls' achievements in particular. Not least, it is also aimed at promoting and developing competence and skills of education staff in relation to monitoring and assessment of "Learning Achievements".

The main aim of this study was to assess learning achievements in language of students in grade three and six in primary schools and to explore some factors that influences their learning achievements.

A survey approach including a test of BCL (Basic Competencies of Learning) was found useful and was carried out. The target population consists of students of grade 3 and 6 in SCA supported primary schools in rural areas of Afghanistan. The survey was conducted in 70 classes of both hot climate and cold climate schools in two Regions (ERO and SRO) at the end of the school year (hot climate schools in May 2001 and cold climate schools in November 2001).

As a whole, the results are on a low but acceptable level. Considering the amount of support these schools have received from SCA, the level seems to be lower than SCA expectations. The average score was around 60 in both grade three and six, which is within acceptable standard, while only 55 per cent of grade three and 62 per cent of grade six students were within the limit for internationally accepted competence i.e. had achieved results which included more than 60 per cent correctness. Twenty per cent of students in grade three and 12.5 per cent in grade six scored less than 33 %. They would have failed if this had been their final exam test. As there is no comparison done with other schools, for example governmental schools, the result cannot indicate any comparative result.

Girls' performances were better than boys' were and that difference was higher in grade six than in grade three.
There was no strong correlation between teachers' training and the results. One reason might be an old model of teacher training.
The formal education level of teachers was of more importance than their professional training, which indicates that there is need for revision of employment rules in SCA supported schools.
There was a negative significance correlation observed in both grades between repetition years and achievements.
The great difference between schools is something that must be seriously addressed. Maybe "good" school can act as "model" or mentor schools for low achieving schools.

Finally, further studies are needed to focus on factors of influence for learning achievements in the related schools and also to explore reasons for the observed great variance between schools.

1. BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM AREA:

In Afghanistan, there is scarcity of adequate or accurate (or both) information about the education provided in the country; in specific, this is true not only with regards to qualitative data but also basic statistics on students and teachers. Very little is known and understood about students learning; what they learn; how they learn or how much they learn in the primary schools that exist. Lack of studies on learning achievements makes it difficult to detect the potential key factors that affect the teaching/learning process and the students' achievements. Finding out factors that affects the learning outcomes and achievements is a first indispensable prerequisite should it be possible to address them.

Historically, girls in Afghanistan have had less access to schools than boys, particularly in rural areas. Many girls' schools are up to grade three only and some times there is no access serviceable for girls beyond grade three. There are at present more than 38,000 girls only in the primary schools supported by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) in rural parts of the country. These girls are often the first females ever in their families to attend schools and often the only females in their villages, who learn to read, write and count. It is, hence, of special interest to find out about girls' learning outcomes in schools; what they learn, whether they learn more or less than or the same as boys and whether there are certain factors that influence particularly girls' achievements. Understanding the factors that influence girls' learning in schools might be a means to further increase girls' participation in education.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aims of the study are:

- To assess learning achievements in language of students in grade three and six in primary schools.
- To explore some factors that influence learning achievements.

In order to reach these aims the following objectives have been set:

- To measure the language competence against Basic Learning Competencies (BLC)[1] by a test elaborated for this purpose

- To explore to what extent differences in language achievements are related to differences between some school variables and between boys and girls.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The exigency for assessment of learning achievements in Afghan schools is widely recognised; not least do many donor agencies demand reports on the outcome of the primary education.

[1] A set of standards developed by UNICEF, UNESCO, NGOs, Afghan authorities and Afghan expertise

SCA has been providing support to primary schools in Afghanistan for the last 20 years. There are concerns about the quality of learning achievement in SCA supported schools in general and in particular to girls' achievements.

In the past, some attempts were made to assess the Learning Achievements of Students in Math by SCA and also by UNICEF and Save the Children US. Nevertheless, when it comes to languages there is no such measure taken yet. The present study is the first attempt of its kind to assess learning achievements in languages.

The efforts of Monitoring of Learning Achievement are based on the assumption that a systematic mechanism for "Monitoring Learning Achievements" is essential for the outgrowth of quality in education. With this in mind, ETSU encourages such endeavours as measures for betterment of the quality and competence development of SCA staff in monitoring the quality of education.

4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The criteria for Basic Learning Competencies for Language grade three and six were favoured as base for the elaboration of the test. Additionally, the Draft Instruments for Assessment Learning Achievements, (Pawar, et al 1992) and other available expertise in ETSU have been consulted. Nevertheless, the validity of the test cannot be guaranteed - the test has not been standardised, for example.

Due to the already recognised big diversity among schools and areas, sampling is a very problematic issue. To make it a representative study and to draw conclusions and generalise findings a broader study and more time will have to be allocated.

The assessment is restricted to written testing and doesn't cover how children read (e.g. speed of reading) and their spoken language skills, which requires deeper interviews and/or classroom observations.

5. SOME CONCEPTS

The paramount objective[2] with mother language's teaching in school is to promote children's written and spoken language's skills, which covers:
Reading: (more than only decoding but comprehension as basic aim - accurate reading, accelerated reading etc);
Writing: (elements of language, expressing ideas in written - correct writing, fast and meaningful writing etc); and
Oral Communication: (vocabulary, understand from others and make others understand).

[2] Moral issues, cultural value, national value, standardizing language etc are other objectives of language teaching in schools.

To penetrate what and how much children achieve in schools, observations, testing and interviews could be applied.

Observation:
Sufficient for small-scale studies
Risk of higher subjectivity and personal biases
Context related, accordingly difficult to generalise findings
Time consuming
Qualitative

Survey (testing)
Adequate for large-scale assessment
Reduced subjectivity
Findings easily generalised
Less time consuming
Quantitative

Test (criterion reference or free test) as a measuring instrument is used to assess children's learning achievement in relation to some aspects i.e. word knowledge, vocabulary, self-writing and written expressions and reading comprehension.

To assess how children read (quality of reading) and their oral language skills, interviews or observations can be applied.

6. RESEARCH DESIGN

6.1 Methodology

Quantitative research methodology with a survey approach was found appropriate as such methodology is regarded as appropriate for covering relatively large-scale and representative sets of data (Blaxter et el. 1996). Basic competencies of language in grade three and six were measured by a test that referred to criteria elaborated in the document Basic Learning Competencies (BLC) for primary schools in Afghanistan. BLC, as defined by Chinapah (1997, p3), "represents the levels of learning in particular subjects including basic knowledge, understanding, skills, abilities, interests, attitudes and values, which are considered as minimum but essential for all pupils to acquire at the end of a particular stage ".

Considering the problems of time, the first step includes only testing (written test) and for the time being the second step, the quality of reading is postponed.

6.2 Sample

The target population consists of students of grade three and six in SCA supported primary schools in rural areas of Afghanistan, as these grades are the final grades of first and second half of primary level. The survey was conducted in hot climate and cold climate schools in ERO[3] and in cold climate schools in SRO. Due to security problems and war plight the survey was not

[3] ERO, SRO, NRO =Eastern, Southern and Northern Regional Offices of SCA

conducted in NRO. Schools were randomly picked from the school lists in these two regions - separately for boys and girls classes.

The result of this sampling procedure was that 43 schools in ten provinces were selected and 1,066 students in grade three and 636 in grade six were tested. The students were also asked to provide information about their personal backgrounds and their family status. 70 teachers, all of them language teachers to the related students, provided information about their own background and about the school in questionnaires.

6.3 Sources of data

The data sources for this cross-sectional study include the following:

- School statistics of Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA).
- Language achievement tests completed by students of grade three and six
- Questionnaires completed by students providing background information about themselves, their parents' occupation and educational background.
- Questionnaires completed by teachers providing background information about their education and experience and about the certain school.

6.4 Assessment instrument

The test for assessment of reading and writing competencies of students in SCA supported schools was structured as below:

Word knowledge:	3 and 4 question areas for grade three and six respectively.
Reading Comprehension:	5 and 4 question areas for grade three and six respectively.
Writing and Written Expression:	2 and 4 question areas for grade three and six respectively.

Totally 10 question areas were developed for grade three and 12 for grade six. In each question area, there were 1-5 questions and most questions were of multiple-choice type. (See Annex 1)

6.5 Questionnaires

In order to interpret students' achievements in relation to different variables, two separate questionnaires were developed: one for the students and one for related language teachers of related grades.

6.6 Data collection

The test was implemented at the end of the school year in both hot climate (May 2001) and cold climate (November 2001) schools. SCA School Consultants, who in advance had been instructed how to handle the test and questionnaires, administered the test.

The test was explained to the students of grade three (as they have no/little experience of multiple choice questions), while grade six students were asked to read the instructions by themselves and perform as directed in written instructions. One hour was given to the students for answering each part. Likewise, the teachers, after getting information and instruction, filled out their questionnaires.

6.7 Data Processing

The gathered data was coded and prepared to be entered into computer. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the analysis of data. The analyses that were carried out were simple tabulations across several categories and correlation analyses. The data analysis was limited to descriptive statistics.

7. RESULTS

7.1. Introduction

The results are analysed from three aspects:

- Assessment of the achievements of the test, i.e. a comparison of the average of total test scores with accepted standards.

- Examination of the correlation between different variables and the language achievement.

- Differences between boys' and girls' mean scores are examined. Mean scores are displayed in tables; for interesting variables and when significant correlation is found correlation coefficients for each group of variables are provided. Test-t was conducted to explore the differences of means between the groups.

7.2.Data analysis

Data analysis has been limited to descriptive statistics. Means, standard deviation, correlation and comparison of means were computed based on the whole sample. First, *Frequency procedures* in SPSS program were used to report the distribution of variables.

7.3.Findings

7.3.1 General findings

Totally 34 classes of hot climate and 36 in cold climate schools were tested, including 43 classes of grade three (30 boys and 13 girls classes), 27 of grade six classes (21 boys and 6 girls). Totally 636 students (535 boys and 101 girls) of grade six and 1066 (826 boys and 240 girls) of grade three participated in this assessment. There were 18 female teachers (6 in grade six and 12 in grade three) and 50 male teachers (21 of grade six and 29 of grade three). In all girl classes except two grade three classes the teachers were female.

The average age of the students was 10.1 years in grade three and 13.1 years in grade six (official age10 and 13 years for grade three and six respectively).

7.3.2 Learning achievements

The language test contained totally 10 and 12 question areas for grade three and six respectively; in the table below divided into three categories; each category includes different number of questions. (Annex 1)

Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA)

Education Technical Support Unit (ETSU)

Monitoring Learning Achievements

Assessment of Reading and Writing in grades 3 and 6
in
SCA Supported Schools in Afghanistan

June, 2002

Amir Mohammad Mansory